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ABSTRACT

In 1989, seven Memphis City Schools (MCS) implemented school-based decision making (SBDM). This paper describes outcomes associated with shared decision-making efforts during the pilot-study years (1989-92) and following years. Data were obtained from participant observation, interviews, administration of The Tennessee School Climate Inventory (TSCI) to teachers and administrators, process analysis, school reports, and student-achievement test scores. The data illustrated the following patterns: (1) Democratic leadership was the only leadership style related to sustained increased student achievement for at least 3 years; (2) democratic leadership can be critical in the implementation of SBDM and faculty retention; (3) faculty retention is also affected by excluding teachers from the decision-making process and by principals who do not support the SBDM process; (4) parent participation can be hurt by uncommitted school professionals; (5) lack of program and administrative continuity can negatively affect instruction and student learning; and (6) teacher empowerment can contribute to improved student-achievement scores in a relatively short time. Six of the seven schools lacked continuity in democratic leadership and SBDM, and district-level or school-level change interrupted whatever improvement had occurred. Finally, when SBDM is not implemented as teachers understand it, faculty retention and student learning are at risk. Five tables are included. (Contains 18 references.) (LMI)

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Challenge to Change: The Memphis Experience with School-Based Decision Making Revisited

Interrupted Continuity

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RUNNING HEAD: Interrupted Continuity

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Challenge to Change: The Memphis Experience with School-Based Decision-Making Revisited

Interrupted Continuity

In spring 1989, seven Memphis City Schools (MCS) began to change their school management strategy from district-level control to school-based decision-making (SBDM). Between 1989 and 1992 we participated in this effort as observers, researchers, and evaluators. The then superintendent and his staff had determined that schools must be freed from excessive regulation and restructured from the bottom up: individuals who would be most affected or who would be expected to carry out change efforts (administrators, teachers, parents, and community residents) must be meaningfully involved in the process. Seven schools were selected to participate in the SBDM pilot project and were declared deregulated. Located in two African-American low-income communities, these schools had reputations as undesirable places to teach and exhibited the violence, vandalism, high teacher turnover rates, low achievement test scores, and run-down facilities often associated with inner-city schools. Three of the schools are located in a community that has experienced economic decline over the past 20 years. The community has been the focus of social reform in housing, jobs, and services through the "Free The Children" initiative supported by the Kaiser Foundation. The other four schools are clustered in a poverty neighborhood which has been targeted for various programs since the 1960s, but without improved student achievement. A report summarizing processes and outcomes through 1992 was published (Etheridge, Horgan, Valesky, Hall, & Terrell, 1994). The present paper will revisit the seven schools to identify and examine the changes and outcomes associated with shared decision-making efforts in Memphis in the years of the pilot study and in the years since.

Data Collection

Patterns and processes between 1989 and 1992 were derived from several data sources[1]: (a) Structured and participant observations were conducted at local school council (LSC), faculty, community, and PTO meetings at all seven sites; (b) School personnel, parents, and community residents were interviewed as part of ongoing participant observations and during site visits; (c) Observations and interviews were conducted at district-level meetings involving the SBDM schools; (d) Intense two-day site visits were conducted at each school in March 1991 and 1992; (e) The Tennessee School Climate Inventory (TSCI) was administered to teachers and administrators in March 1991 and 1992[2]; (f) A stratified sample of three schools representing each school level--

[1] See Etheridge and Valesky (1992) for detailed discussion of methodology.

[2] For a detailed technical discussion of this instrument see Butler and Alberg (1991).

elementary, junior high, and high school--was used for detailed process study; and (g) Statistical data provided by the school district including student achievement test scores and school vandalism reports were examined.

Since 1992 we periodically participated in district-level site-based management task forces and other committees and observed events affecting shared decision-making. In addition, we interviewed parents, teachers, and principals from the seven schools who had been key collaborators in the initial study. They were asked how changes in the district had affected them and their schools and how decisions currently occur in their schools. Faculty rosters were retrieved from 1989 through 1994 to determine faculty retention rates. Finally, student scale scores from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) for 1991 through 1994 were retrieved to determine student achievement changes.

Initial Efforts

The initial school-based decision-making design was based on the Marburger (1985) model. Decision-making participation was promoted through a local school council (LSC) and a professional advisory committee. The local school council consisted of the principal and six elected members--two parents, one community resident, and three teachers. Each elected member represented a group which had selected the member by secret ballot. Guidelines mandated that the chair of the LSC be a parent or community representative, thereby balancing the power of school professionals and other citizens and avoiding two problems experienced elsewhere: LSC anarchy, with parents grabbing political power, as had occurred in New York City early efforts; and LSC rubber stamping for principals, as had been characteristic of Title I advisory committees (Gittell, Hoffacker, Rollins, & Foster, 1979). Each LSC was charged with setting goals, giving advice on implementation practices, and evaluating goal achievement. In addition, the council interviewed and recommended teachers and administrators for employment at the local school. The professional advisory committee, composed of department heads or grade chairpersons in the school, served as the liaison between teachers and the administrative staff.

In his classic analysis of change, Lewin (1947) suggested that organizations exist in an equilibrium that maintains the status quo. For change to occur, a state of disequilibrium must be induced. In the case of Memphis, disequilibrium was achieved by figuratively closing the seven schools. All professional staff positions were declared and posted as vacant. Employees holding those positions had to reapply for their positions. The schools were reopened in fall 1989 with faculty and administrators who had been interviewed and recommended for hire by a committee of parents, teachers, and administrators. To attract skilled professionals, teachers were offered decision-making authority and a $3000 pay supplement. New hires accounted for an average of 27 percent of each deregulated school faculty. Four of the seven school principals hired were new to the school (Etheridge, Horgan, Valesky, Hall, & Terrell, 1994).

Patterns in the initial effort. After the initial three years of SBDM implementation, teacher attendance rates were improved; school faculties were stabilized in some schools; teachers showed commitment to the SBDM process; and school climates were improved. Other changes noted included evidence that teachers and parents believed they could make decisions about school curriculum and instructional practices if allowed. Teachers were involved in decision-making at the grade or department level, but the general faculty was less likely to be involved in school-level consensus decisions. Some schools showed evidence of increased decision-making involvement by local school councils; however, few councils were successful in getting decisions implemented. Parent involvement was improved, and it was demonstrated that parents and community members in leadership positions could be persistent, willing to learn, and reliable in carrying out their tasks (Etheridge, Horgan, Valesky, Hall, & Terrell, 1994; Etheridge, Hall, Clark, & Duncan, 1991-92; Etheridge & Collins, 1992).

Training was delivered inconsistently and intermittently to participant groups across the initial SBDM effort. Most school personnel received training which focused on consensus and team building, goal setting, and planning. The bulk of this training occurred during the first year. Teachers received the least and most haphazard training, local school councils received the most training, and parents received training the most consistently over the life of the project. Minimal training was provided to everyone on how to insure that plans were implemented. In fact, SBDM teams were often expected to function efficiently after a few workshops, and incomplete and sporadic training was a prime inhibitor of successful SBDM implementation (Etheridge, Horgan, Valesky, Hall, & Terrell, 1994).

The principal's leadership style was found to relate to the progress of SBDM implementation. Leadership theories abound (Glickman, 1981; Likert, 1967; Litwin & Stringer, 1968; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). In the Memphis study, Lewin, Lippitt, and White's labels were used as a framework for examining the relationship between leadership style and decision-making processes. Principals were identified as laissez-faire, democratic, or authoritarian. The schools with a democratic leader exhibited the most rapid progress toward shared decision-making and extensive participant involvement (Etheridge & Valesky, 1992).

Recommendations from the initial project. The change from top-down bureaucratic management to a bottom-up democratic strategy was not easily accomplished. Administrator propensity to issue mandates and teacher propensity to accept and carry out those mandates were persistent. Thus, a number of recommendations were made related to training. Training should be ongoing for SBDM participants and should assist in identifying their responsibilities. In addition, training should take participants beyond team building and planning stages to include several elements that facilitate movement toward successful implementation: how to have efficient and meaningful meetings, how to focus on issues within their domains, how to

seek information, how and when to involve stakeholders, and how to evaluate. Other recommendations included the provision of planning time during the normal work day, opportunity to network with other professionals, and formal authority to make decisions and assume responsibility for the decisions. Finally, it was recommended that a democratic leadership style should be a criterion for selecting school leaders (Etheridge, Horgan, Valesky, Hall, & Terrell, 1994; Etheridge, Horgan, Valesky, & Smith, 1992).

District Level Changes After 1992

A new superintendent was hired to begin the 1992/93 school year and initiated several changes including eliminating many central office positions and reassigning people to work in schools. To further decentralize, reduce existing bureaucracy, and establish a support network, all schools in the district were divided into clusters. Each cluster is now led by one principal and contains twelve schools including elementary, junior high or middle, and high schools. The clusters are regionalized to some extent but are also established to assure inner-city and suburban representation. Principals who serve as cluster leaders meet regularly and are assigned responsibility for handling many decisions that were previously handed down from central office.

In spring 1993, the new district superintendent announced that the pilot SBDM program, as defined for the seven schools, had concluded and teachers would no longer receive the pay supplement. This step removed a major barrier which had inhibited the extension of shared decision-making to other schools in the district. Central office management was reorganized and a new plan announced for continuing shared decision-making but as site-based management (SBM). The terminology was different, but the philosophy and intended practice were the same as those of SBDM. Site-based management combines Phillip Schlecty's approach with Total Quality Management. Initially, schools applied to become SBM schools. The seven SBDM schools were allowed to continue as they were under the new system. All of the pilot schools elected to continue, and several professionals from the seven schools were asked to provide leadership for the new efforts. However, there was much conversation and concern over the demise of SBDM and the disempowering of teachers in the seven schools. Nineteen other schools also became site-based management sites during 1993-94. During 1994-95, 44 additional schools joined. By 1995-96, the goal is for all 160 schools in the district to be site-based management schools (Memphis City Schools, 1994).

In order to facilitate school restructuring and enhance student learning, schools were encouraged to use site-based management. A variety and increasing number of initiatives have been put into place to encourage departure from the traditional worksheet-and-drill methods. These include a mini-grant system whereby schools or teachers apply for money to support curricular innovations. The district, in collaboration with The University of Memphis, and after a consensus decision at the school level, established a network of professional development schools and is in

the process of establishing a set of New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) demonstration schools. All of these initiatives require site-based decisions and in some instances majority faculty consensus agreement.

One other change of note coming from the central office was a school structural shift from junior high schools to middle schools. It involved moving sixth grades out of the elementary schools and ninth grades to the high schools. How this decision was made is unclear; however, some schools in the district experienced controversy when parents opposed the change and fought to retain their junior high school structure. One junior high school among the seven schools was changed to a middle school.

An element of note that did not change after 1992 was training. An SBDM training contract was awarded to be delivered by one entity, thus providing consistency and continuity. The training to date, however, continues to focus on team building and strategic planning and is delivered intermittently.

Personnel changes. Since the 1989/90 school year, several changes in principal leadership occurred among the seven schools. Principalships changed at three schools during the initial project: Meeks, Peanut , and Anchorage[3]. After 1993, the principal at Bond transferred to another school in the district and the Progress principal retired, leaving only two schools that have retained the same principal since 1989/90.

Table 1 indicates that faculties were not completely stable during nor after the SBDM pilot project. Some faculty change is to be expected; however, some school faculties showed more stability than others. The changes can be related to several factors. One important factor is that in spring 1993, the new district superintendent formally announced that the pilot SBDM program, as defined for the seven schools, had concluded and teachers would no longer receive the pay supplement. On the surface, it seems there was a major impact in at least some schools since an obvious decline in original faculty occurred between 1991/1992 and 1994/95.

Other factors were also at play. Interviews with teachers from the case study schools revealed several reasons for teachers' departure. In some instances, teachers became discouraged because their decision-making authority had not materialized as they had expected. For example, Bond Elementary school had a stable faculty throughout the SBDM years. Teachers at Bond were enthusiastic about SBDM and the possibilities of making curricular changes. Interviews throughout the pilot consistently indicated high energy levels and commitment to improving the school. However, communication problems occurred with the local school council regarding teacher roles in decision-making. Most decision-making was occurring at the grade level (Hall, 1992). Teachers became frustrated; interviews after 1992 revealed that a number of school

[3]Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of participants.

Table 1

Faculty Retention

	# Original Faculty 1989/90	# Original Faculty Retained 1991/92	# Original Faculty Retained 1994/95	% 1989 Retained
* **Bond (B1)**	30[2]	29[2]	19+ ++	63
Yukon (Y2)	33[2]	22[2]	11[2]	30
Peachtree (P3)	61[4]	42[4]	29[4]	48
Meeks (M4)	34[3]	18+	12[3]	35
* **Progress (P5)****	42	33[3]	21***[3]	50
Anchorage (A6)	33[3]	**	12[2]	36
* **Peanut (P7)**	26[3]	20[1]	19[1]	75[1]

* Case schools
\+ New principal this year
++ Sixth grade moved to middle school (2 teachers)
** New principal in 93/94 (faculty data not available)
*** Became a middle school in 93/94 (added sixth grade)

[1]Democratic Principal [2]Laissez Faire Principal [3]Autocratic Principal [4]Benevolent Autocratic Principal

transfers were requested during the 1993-94 school year. By 1994/95, Bond lost 37 percent of its original SBDM faculty.

Other teachers were burned out in addition to being disillusioned. Consider the teachers at Progress who committed with missionary deal to SBDM and improving their school. Committees flourished, the school hummed with teacher efforts and accomplishments, and parents and students were proud of their neighborhood school. By spring 1992, however, teachers realized that most initiatives had been ideas of their charismatic principal who was really making most decisions and was increasingly less tolerant when teachers insisted on their own ideas; teachers were becoming disillusioned. The principal increasingly adopted an autocratic leadership style, and teachers observed the school council merely approving issues brought forth by the principal. When the announcement was made that the SBDM pilot project was terminated, Progress Junior High teachers had other things on their minds. Their principal announced retirement plans, and a new principal was hired that same spring of 1993. Teachers had supported their assistant principal for principal, but the superintendent had selected someone else. Then during 1993/94, Progress became a middle school without teacher involvement in the decision. The school closed in spring 1993 as a junior high, and in fall 1993 teachers returned to discover a middle school. Teachers were burned out, with no energy left after the SBDM effort. They realized that they were not really empowered decision-makers and their pay supplement was gone; 28 percent of the original 1989/90 teachers transferred from the school after the 1991/1992 school year. During this period, the school added a sixth grade and lost a ninth grade so some of the original teachers followed the ninth grade to the high school; interviews revealed feelings of burnout and disappointment among these teachers.

For other teachers, perceived change in principal management strategy was a catalyst for leaving the school. Consider Peanut. Few teachers left the school during the SBDM pilot. Teachers congealed as a group during controversy over their original autocratic principal. This principal was finally removed in 1991/92 and replaced by a more democratic principal who had been selected by consensus faculty decision (Etheridge & Collins, 1992). The new principal was committed to SBDM and encouraged teacher decision-making participation via committees and the local school council. When the SBDM pilot ended, there was no mass exodus of teachers. The principal and faculty agreed to continue business as usual, and the retention of original faculty was 75 percent between 1989/1990 and 1994/1995. However, in 1995 interviews, teachers voiced a perception that the principal was more autocratic than in the past. Teacher decision-making committees continued to function in several areas: discipline, finance, and community affairs; however, teachers reported their decisions went directly to the principal for approval. Though the principal reviewed decisions for their adherence to district, state, and federal policy and law and had never rescinded a decision, the fact that the principal had to approve everything was cited by

teachers as evidence that decision-making power rested in the principal's office, instead of with teachers. The following teacher response to the question "What is the most important change in this school since SBDM ended?" illustrates this viewpoint:

> This is a principal school. All goes through the principal. When [the principal] is not here, things wait for [the principal] to return. It is not necessarily worse, but it is different. We get a lot of dictates. Previously we discussed lesson plans; now we get nasty letters.

Finally, teachers reported desire to transfer out of a school because of demoralization over student achievement test scores. Teachers verbalized that they were doing the best they could but that the principals, under pressure from central administration because of TCAP scores below state norms, were holding teachers accountable for low student scores[4]. Teachers were commonly asked what they were doing to raise scores. Teachers were pressured not only to upgrade regular curriculum and instruction, but to implement a "boot camp" test-taking skills curriculum designed to increase scores. Seeing the task as hopeless, teachers reported plans to submit transfer requests to schools where students are less difficult to teach.

School council changes. The initial SBDM effort included a representative council structured to ensure parent leadership and a school professional-parent balance of power and responsibility. It was empowered to make school policy decisions in the areas of curriculum, instruction, personnel, and budget. The current approach requires a School Leadership Council whose charge, similar to the prior LSC, is to set school policy within federal, state, and local laws and guidelines and specifically to participate in pertinent decisions related to improving student learning and to approve and evaluate the school's plan (Memphis City Schools, 1994b). The Leadership Council is required to be composed of teaching and non-teaching staff, the principal, community members, parents, and secondary students; each is elected by its own constituent group except for community members who are appointed by the council. The new councils are structured so that parent representatives are equal to all professional representatives except the principal, and anyone on the council can be elected chair, thereby allowing the balance of power and responsibility to shift to school personnel.

Among the seven SBDM schools, only Peanut retains a parent as chair under the new system. However, teachers from Peanut report that they are aware of only one decision made by their council, a recommendation to encourage students to wash their hands because of an Hepatitis-A epidemic. In addition, no minutes are posted as was the procedure during the pilot, and teachers report they do not attend council meetings because, as one teacher said, "It is evident that no decisions come from it." This relegation of the council to unimportance is a typical post-1992

[4]The district in turn was under state pressure to bring TCAP scores up to state norms.

occurrence among the seven schools; all schools have councils but, like the council at Peanut, they make no meaningful decisions or worse, seldom meet. In some schools, teachers are unaware of the council's existence.

The demise of parent chairs and council power and presence is not lamented by most teachers and principals. Under the original SBDM system, there was a persistent view among school personnel that parents, having no knowledge of "school affairs," had no business being in charge of the councils and questionable ability to participate meaningfully. On the other hand, by 1993, parents were becoming active, even asking the school board for very specific guidelines for their involvement. School professionals reported concern about this kind of active parent role (Hall, 1992; Etheridge, Hall, & Etheridge; 1995) even though in at least four schools, the council leadership of a parent had proven to be the catalyst for a movement toward true shared decision-making.

Other changes in the school councils are related to how council members are elected. Parents had been elected in neighborhood campaigns, with plenty of advance notice and the school serving as the polling place. Under the new system, parents are elected by the established parent organization at the school such as the PTA or PTO. The parent organization is responsible for developing procedures for the parent election according to the following ground rules: (a) All parents at the school must have opportunity to participate in the process; (b) Provisions must be made for the election of a diverse group, reflective of the school's diversity (racial, ethnic, geog aphic, etc.); and (c) The election must be conducted in a fair and defensible manner. The parent group will determine the balloting process, when and where the election will occur, and who will count the votes (Memphis City Schools, 1994b). Interviews revealed that in at least two schools parents were nominated and elected during a single PTA meeting or open house with no advance notice.

School councils after 1993 also exhibited different states of activity. School councils like the one at Bond experienced a period of inactivity but began meeting again in 1994/95. Bond's council members received team building training during spring 1994. Though parents continued to be on the council, they were not as actively involved as in prior years. Attendance, discipline, and fundraising issues--the same unresolved issues of concern in 1992--remained the issues of 1994. Some school councils had not met since 1992/93, when the SBDM pilot study ended. At Progress, for example, new members were elected in spring 1994, but no evidence was observed that regular meetings had been held.

Student achievement. Student total battery scale scores from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) for 1991 through 1994 were retrieved for grades 5, 8, and 10 as representative of school performance. Scores prior to 1990 were not retrieved because a different test had been given in those years and comparisons were not possible.

1990/1991 scores were used as baseline scores; 1991/1992 through 1992/1993 represented two and three years of SBDM implementation and emphasis; 1992/93 is the year the new superintendent came on board with SBDM continuing in the seven schools; and 1993/94 is the year when pay supplements to SBDM faculty were stopped, the district formally changed to an SBM philosophy, and the state instituted stricter TCAP test-taking controls to eliminate achievement test cheating. The seven SBDM schools were matched with seven non-SBDM schools from the district. As illustrated in Table 2, schools were matched as closely as possible based on student ethnic composition, grade levels housed in the school, student enrollment, percent of students overage for the grade to which they were assigned, student attendance rates, student mobility rates, and percent of students receiving free lunch. Total battery scale scores on the TCAP of the SBDM and comparison schools in representative grades for the period 1991 through 1994 were plotted.

Achievement test scores are difficult to change and must be studied longitudinally and contextually before conclusions can be made about the effectiveness of teaching and learning in a particular school. Examination of Tables 3, 4, and 5 reveals that no one achievement pattern is evident among all comparison or all SBDM schools. Nor is there one pattern distinguishing SBDM from comparison schools. However several patterns of changes in student achievement test scores among SBDM schools are important when the context is understood. The most meaningful pattern is the three years of sustained increase in achievement test scores accomplished in tenth grade at Peanut (P6, Table 3), the only school to exhibit this pattern. The educators at this school do not view this as an accomplishment of merit because they lament, "Our overall percentile rank is so low compared to state expected norms." Despite their concern, the pattern is meaningful because none of the other SBDM or comparison schools accomplished the same kind of sustained improvement and because it predicts future achievement increases. Close examination of contextual factors at Peanut revealed that the school was led by a principal, who, through consensus faculty decision-making, was selected after a year-long faculty conflict with a prior autocratic principal (Etheridge & Collins, 1992). This principal had a democratic leadership style and systematically and consistently between 1990/91 and 1993/94 strived to involve all faculty in department-level and school-level decisions for the purpose of improving student achievement. This principal was the only principal among the seven SBDM schools who consistently facilitated shared decision-making. As a result, teachers were committed to participating in school-level decisions and, as stated earlier, Peanut's faculty remained the most stable of the seven schools, retaining 75 percent of its original 1989/90 teachers. This case illustrates the premise that democratic leadership can facilitate school-level consensus decision-making by teachers which is related to high levels of faculty retention and sustained increases in student learning.

As presented in Table 4, two schools (B1 and Y2) exhibited a student achievement pattern of two-years increase in achievement test scores followed by a third-year drop. In both schools,

Table 2

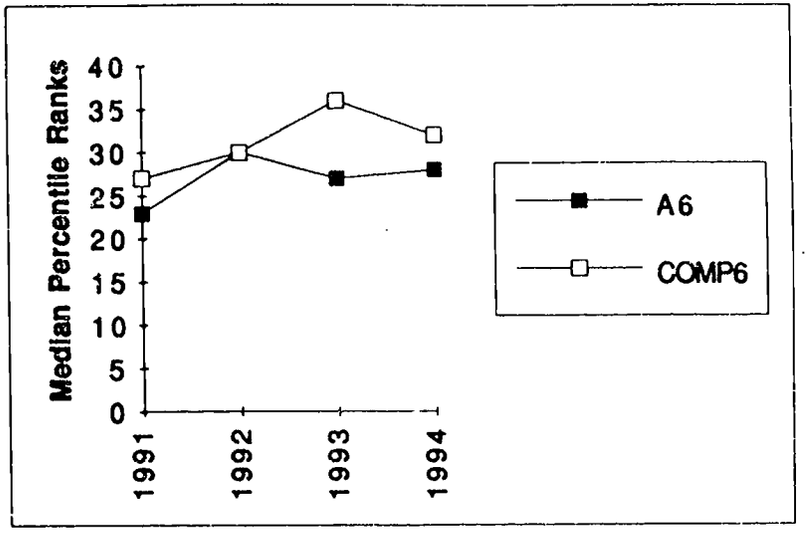
SBDM and Non-SBDM Matched Pairings[1]

SCHOOL	Grade Levels	% African-American	Enrollment	% Overage for Grade	% Attendance	% Mobility	% Free Lunch
Bond (P1)	k-6[2]	100	459	41	92	33	94
Comparison 1	k-6	100	399	30	93	34	89
Yukon (Y2)	k-6	99	473	38	94	37	86
Comparison 2	k-6	98	586	32	95	39	88
Peachtree (P3)	k-6	99	977	37	91	30	95
Comparison 3	k-6	100	700	43	93	48	97
Meeks (M4)	7-9	100	696	60	83	54	85
Comparison 4	7-9	100	508	61	85	48	84
Progress (P5)	7-9[3]	100	722	63	84	40	89
Comparison 5	7-9	100	474	58	89	43	76
Anchorage (A6)	10-12	100	709	50	78	38	70
Comparison 6	10-12	100	659	59	86	51	73
Peanut (P7)	10-12[4]	100	454	53	82	42	88
Comparison 7	10-12	100	730	54	88	48	73

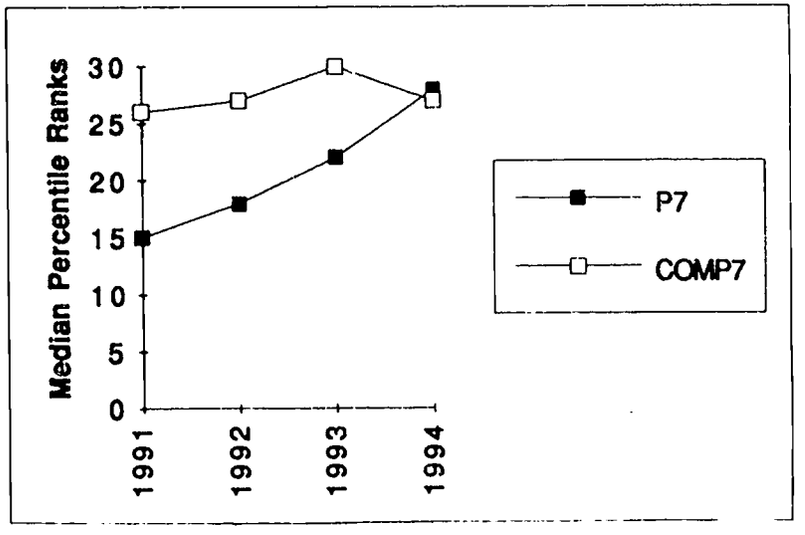
[1]Source, 1993.94 School Profile, Research Services Memphis City Schools.
[2]k-5 beginning 1993/94 school year
[3]7-9 beginning 1993/94
[4]10-12 beginning 1993/94

TABLE 3. TOTAL BATTERY, COMPREHENSIVE TEST OF BASIC SKILLS: Grade 10

	A6	COMP6
1991	23	27
1992	30	30
1993	27	36
1994	28	32

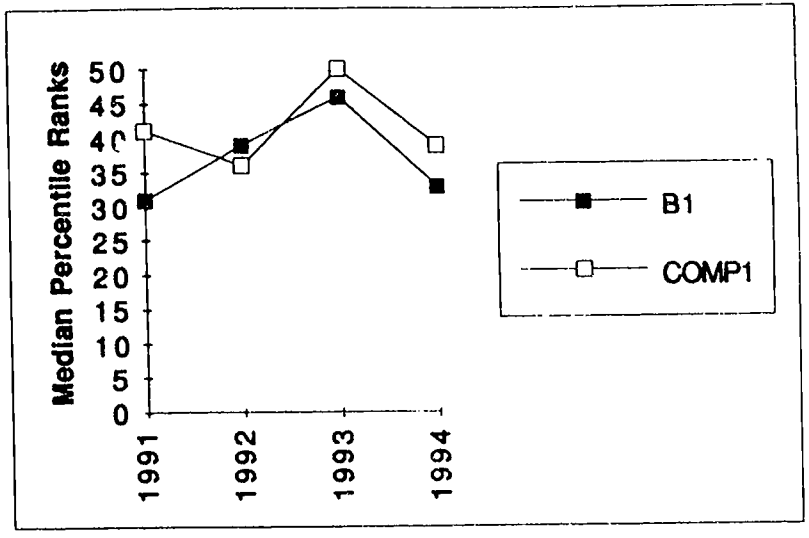


	P7	COMP7
1991	15	26
1992	18	27
1993	22	30
1994	28	27

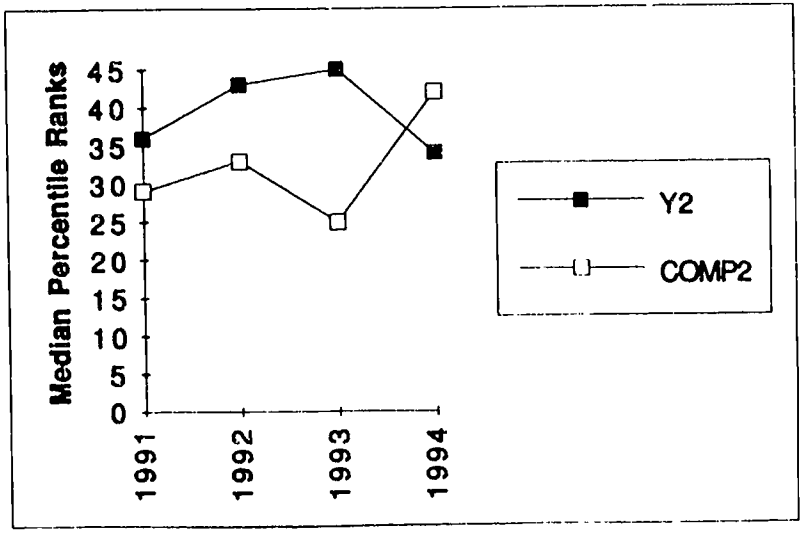


ABLE 4. TOTAL BATTERY, COMPREHENSIVE TEST OF BASIC SKILLS: Grade 5

	B1	COMP1
1991	31	41
1992	39	36
1993	46	50
1994	33	39

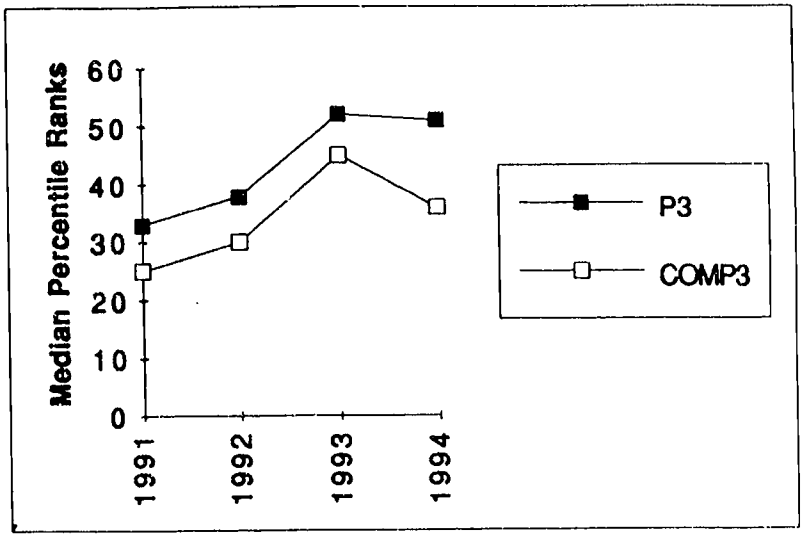


	Y2	COMP2
1991	36	29
1992	43	33
1993	45	25
1994	34	42



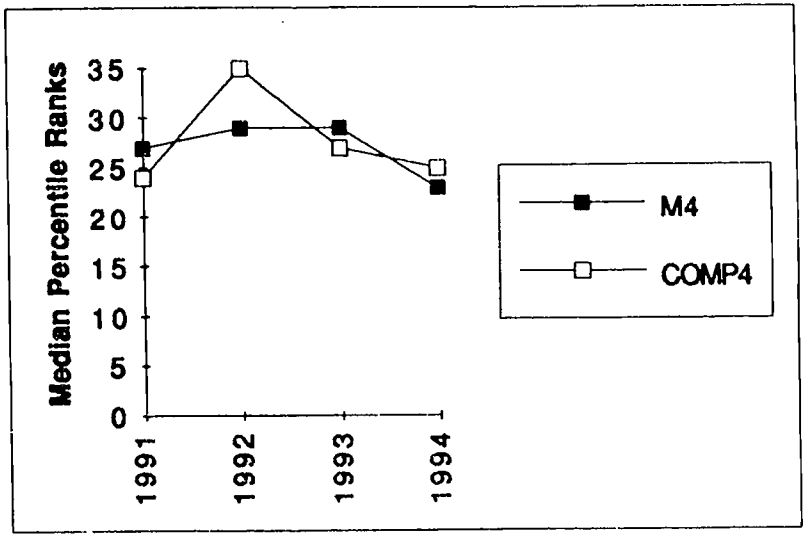
ABLE 4, CONT. TOTAL BATTERY, COMPREHENSIVE TEST OF BASIC SKILLS: Grade 5

	P3	COMP3
1991	33	25
1992	38	30
1993	52	45
1994	51	36

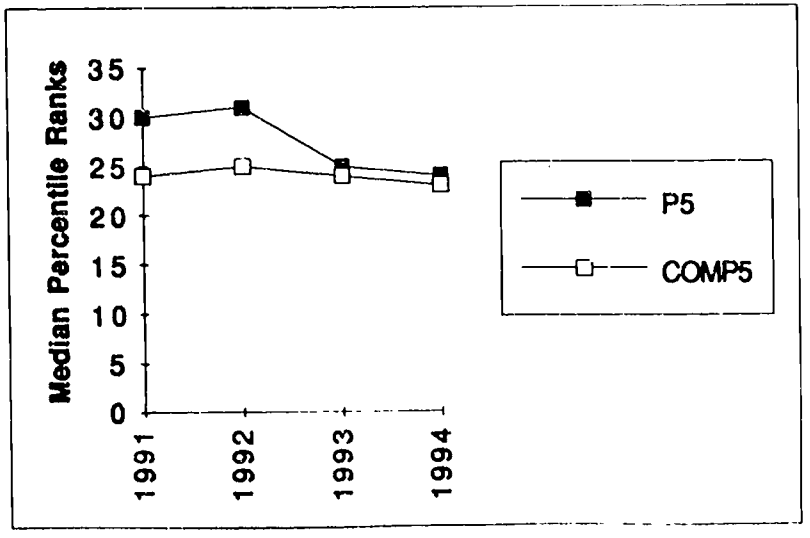


ABLE 5. TOTAL BATTERY, COMPREHENSIVE TEST OF BASIC SKILLS: Grade 8

	M4	COMP4
1991	27	24
1992	29	35
1993	29	27
1994	23	25



	P5	COMP5
1991	30	24
1992	31	25
1993	25	24
1994	24	23



teachers consistently worked toward consensus decisions at grade level, but not at the school level. Both principals exhibited laissez-faire leadership styles and did not work systematically toward involving teachers in consensus school-level decisions. Although teachers were committed to improving student achievement and to SBDM processes, there were continuing conflicts (especially Y2) between teachers and principals and between teachers and the school council over how school-level decisions should be made and who should be involved. Teachers talked of frustration and disappointment over their lack of decision-making participation. These dynamics suggest that school professionals were not unified in their strategy for accomplishing their goals and, therefore, were more vulnerable to the uncertainties related to changes brought about by the new superintendent; this was reflected in the 1994 decline in achievement test scores.

A third school (P3, Table 4) showed a small drop in 1994 scores and, in effect, plateaued. This principal was a benevolent autocrat who repeatedly kept the goal of student achievement before the faculty. This pattern illustrates that when consistent leadership is present, student achievement can be increased without shared decision-making. However, increased student achievement is not sustained in the face of district changes.

Another pattern in student achievement is a two-year plateau followed by a drop as illustrated by Meeks School (M4, Table 5). This site had two autocratic principals during the four years under examination. During 1989/90 through 1990/91, the school was chaotic with poor student discipline and no shared decision-making at grade, department, or school levels. Teachers reported being completely disenfranchised and powerless. A new administrator, hired for the 1991-92 school year, brought order to the school's student body but was not trained for SBDM. Though active decision-makers at the department level, teachers reported having no involvement in school-level decisions. By 1994, this school retained only 35 percent of its original faculty. This suggests that under autocratic leadership teachers will leave a school and teaching and learning are not enhanced. Further, the drop in 1994 scores suggests that in situations when teachers are not involved in school decisions, instruction resulting in improved learning is vulnerable to district changes.

A final pattern of interest was illustrated by Progress (P5, Table 5) where a small increase in achievement scores was followed by a decline and plateau. Until 1992, this school was reported by teachers to be led by a democratic leader. Teachers were euphoric about SBDM. With missionary zeal, they served on department teams and school committees and sang the praises of their cooperative efforts and SBDM. However, by the end of the 1991/92 school year, teachers tired of the frenetic committee work and realized they were "rubber-stamping" a charismatic leader. They increasingly voiced frustration with failed efforts to get approval for their ideas and expressed the view that the principal did much for the school but was an autocrat. In 1993/94, the principal retired and district changes related to SBM occurred. This pattern suggests that initial zeal is short-

lived and can detract from teaching and learning when teachers are not truly empowered decision-makers. Whatever teaching effectiveness they have is minimal and vulnerable to school administrative and district changes.

Conclusions

While generalizations to larger populations cannot be made based on these data, the data illustrate several meaningful patterns: (a) Democratic leadership is the only leadership style shown to be related to sustained increased student achievement for at least three years; (b) Democratic leadership can be critical to implementing SBDM and to retaining faculty in a school; (c) Though faculty retention can be endangered by loss of supplements, teacher frustration over not being involved in the school-level decision-making process, and frustration over having principals who do not appear to be committed to or able to facilitate the shared decision-making processes can also be critical factors related to loss of teachers; (d) In situations where school professionals are not committed to parent involvement in school decisions, parental participation is very fragile and can be eliminated quickly by changing the school council structure that encourages it; (e) Lack of program and administrative continuity can negatively affect instruction and student learning; and (f) When teachers are or anticipate being empowered decision-makers, student achievement scores can be increased in a relatively short period of time. However, interruption of the continuity coupled with frustration of the expectation to be empowered can interrupt a pattern of improved student achievement.

The SBDM efforts in Memphis illustrate the historical pattern in schools where change is instituted without attention to continuity. In six of the seven SBDM schools of study which lacked this continuity, district-level or school-level change interrupted whatever improvement occurred. One school demonstrated that continuous democratic leadership coupled with the shared decision to maintain continuity at the local school level can prevent the interruption of achievement gains which may occur with district changes. The patterns presented above are compatible with the premise that when teachers are empowered decision-makers positive changes in student learning occur in the school. This study also provides evidence supporting the premise that when SBDM is not being implemented as teachers understand it should occur, faculty retention and student learning are at risk. This study, in our view, strengthens the argument that SBDM holds promise for facilitating school improvements that lead to increased student learning.

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